

**BOZEMAN DAILY
CHRONICLE**

Bozeman MT 59715

Daily

FEB 24 2005Superior Clipping Service
Glendive MT 406-377-6612

Libby recruits businesses for sawmill site

LIBBY (AP) — Some businesses have moved to the property where Stimson Lumber Co. idled its sawmill two years ago, and economic-development officials trying to cushion the loss of 300 lumber jobs hope to draw more employers to the site.

Stimson gave a 411-acre Libby industrial parcel to the newly formed Lincoln County Port Authority and received a tax break in return. The authority oversees the land and buildings, and the Kootenai River Development Corp. works to draw businesses.

The seven now operating on the old Stimson property together provide about 100 jobs, nearly one-third of them in a small operation that Stimson has maintained here, said Jim Mayo, port authority chairman. Stimson's small plant, employing about 30 people, joins small pieces of lumber together to create building materials.

Mayo said a post-and-pole company from Idaho will move to the Stimson property within days, bringing six to eight direct jobs and generating 25-35 forest jobs necessary to keep the business supplied with logs.

Producers of architectural stone, furniture and boilers are among the businesses already in place. Other tenants include the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, overseeing a major asbestos cleanup in Libby. Part of the Stimson land has been designated a motocross course.

Buildings cover about eight acres, said Mayo, adding the site's assets include a 34,000-volt power line and a railroad spur.

Consultants hired by the authority produced an extensively landscaped plan that would cost about \$55 million to fulfill, Mayo said.

"We'd like to spiff the place up and have it look like a professional operation," he said. But money is a concern and there are many questions surrounding how much of the plan should be pursued, he said.